CURRICULUM AREA PROJECT

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Implications of the Common Core State Standards

for English Language Arts,

Grade 12

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Abstract

The purpose of this document is to interpret the Common Core State Standards as they apply to the teaching of ELA in Grade 12. Each section and subsection is first summarized, and then interpreted in italics. In addition to interpretation, the italicized sections include questions regarding how we might proceed in addressing the topic, concerns about what we currently do or should be doing, and specific examples of how these standards are already being met. This document breaks down the Introduction, and then each Standard (Reading-Literature and Informational Texts, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language), beginning with the CCR Anchor Standards and continuing with the analysis of each subheading. This document represents the English Department’s first step in understanding how the Common Core State Standards will be implemented in our curriculum.

**Implications of the Common Core State Standards for**

**Grade 12,**

**English Language Arts**

**Introduction**

All students should be college and career ready (CCR) in literacy no later than the end of high school.

*It seems that the criteria for “college and career readiness” are changing rapidly due to evolving technology and a faltering economy. This is a phrase that will require constant reevaluation in order to meet the current standards of today’s world.*

These Standards reflect the input of the state department of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators, parents, students, and other members of the public.

*The standards represent a wide field of study and research and supposedly synthesize the best elements of such.*

These Standards address grade-specific ideals in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language for CCR, and acknowledge the “broad” aims of such standards as they pertain to each grade level.

*Standards should be grade-level appropriate, and will all aim to ultimately yield CCR for all students. Again, the K-12 experience for any one child in the 21st century may demonstrate changing philosophies due to technology and the political/economic climate. In other words, what may be considered standard for achieving CCR for a third grader today may change by the time that same student reaches high school, due to rapid societal evolution.*

The introduction acknowledges that the Standards “lay out a vision” of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. It is suggested that 21st century literacy will include a wide range of skills, focusing on close, attentive reading and habitual critical reading.

*This point acknowledges the current state of media, in which students will have to sort through seemingly infinite amounts of material, both digital and print, to draw meaningful connections and present their findings as such. Seniors in high school in our district, by and large, have access to an abundance of such media, and will have to learn how to discern quality sources, or relevant sources, in order to be CCR.*

**Key Design Considerations**

The Standards are grade-specific from K through eight, and then exist in two-year bands to allow “schools, districts, and states flexibility in high school course design.”

*This is a key point, in that we take great pride in the specific design of our courses; although each high school year is thematically designated, teachers, at present have and enjoy a certain flexibility regarding the inclusion of certain texts/materials.* *Allowing such flexibility not only ensures that teachers maintain a certain freshness when it comes to approaching material, it also provides an impetus that exists beyond mere discipline when it comes to sharing such material with students; a teacher’s passion and interests can serve to help carry students into the study of certain material with a momentum that a merely disciplined approach does not typically afford.*

-Focus on results, rather than means

By focusing on achievements, the creators of the Standards leave room for flexibility in *how* these goals shall be achieved. In addition, teachers are free to use their professional judgment and experience to identify materials, tools, and strategies appropriate for their classes.

*Again, this freedom will help in the transition to accommodate this new set of standards. It, on a base level, allows the teacher a certain level of autonomy, while providing an achievable goal for all students and educators.*

-An integrated model of literacy

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are addressed separately among the Standards, but should be considered integrated disciplines. They are cross-references throughout the Standards regarding expectations.

*Yes, of course one cannot entirely separate these disciplines in their teaching or assessment. They play an integrated role in one’s literacy.*

-Research and media skills blended into the Standards as a whole

Research must be taught as a skill essential to comprehending/analyzing/reporting today’s world.

*This bullet seems to imply that our traditional methods of research should be reevaluated in light of technological developments that implore our students and ourselves, as citizens, to be filters for the constant stream of information in this Information Age. Perhaps we should be willing to look beyond traditional “research papers” as a sole means of teaching this skill in order to include the day to day “research” one must do in order to evaluate the up-to-the-minute flow of information. A discerning eye in this regard is more valuable than ever, and educating our students, particularly seniors, to develop this skill will be essential to CCR.*

-Shared responsibility for students’ literacy

This section acknowledges that while teachers of ELA will continue to play a unique role in the literacy of our students, teachers of all subjects, particularly on the high school level, will increasingly be responsible for developing our students’ literacy. In addition, informational texts and a higher volume of reading are found in post-secondary education, forcing us to reevaluate our own text selection across the curriculum.

*While this point is well-taken, in that students’ success in high school depends on their literacy across the curriculum, it is currently unclear what the role of the other disciplines will be. The Standards are developed in two sections, one for ELA and one for all other subjects. How, ultimately, will be the burden of teaching literacy be distributed across the curriculum?* *It must be kept in mind that in a 40 minute class period, the other disciplines have much subject-based material to cover, and thus the teaching of literacy would necessarily have to be woven directly into that material and not expected to be injected now and then as an extra assignment here and there. Perhaps the use of textbooks is/could be considered teaching literacy?*

**Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages by Grade in the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework**

In an effort to prepare many more students for CCR, the Standards aim to greatly increase the amount informational reading included in our courses. By the 12th grade, 70% of what students read in school should be information based—literary non-fiction. This section also makes note of the need for ELA courses to include other kinds of literature, including fiction, poetry, and drama. These percentages reflect the sum of student reading, however, and therefore would include any reading the student does across the curriculum—which is already dominated by informational texts.

*It is clear that there is to be a greater emphasis on informational reading across the disciplines. It also seems to be implied, however, that although ELA teachers will still be teaching fictional literary texts, there still must be a greater awareness in preparing our students to read for information. This will, no doubt, become a delicate balancing act, as we attempt simultaneously to provide students with the rich, cultural, canonical texts we have come to trust and respect, with informational readings that will prepare our students for the immediacy of our current culture. We, as ELA teachers, must also become aware of the variety and volume of texts our students are seeing in other departments of the building. This will absolutely require better communication and cross-curriculum planning, so that we can be certain our students achieve that “70%.”*

*Strong efforts must be made to preserve the ability of the ELA teachers to present a wide range of literature without being overly burdened by the task of rejecting classic works simply to include nonfiction.*

**Distribution of Communicative Purposes by Grade in the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework**

The purpose of student writing should be increasingly to persuade and explain, as opposed to convey experience. As previously stated, the specific expectations of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language need not be a separate focus for instruction or assessment.

*While experiential writing has long been a focus of ELA instruction, it is now essential to emphasize persuasive and explanation-based pieces. Experiential writing should only be 20% of a student’s writing. For seniors, the writing of the college essay is a great benchmark on the road to being CCR. Students must be prepared to write personally as a means of persuasion, once again reinforcing the cross-pollination of the skills we teach. By the twelfth grade, students ought to be able to realize that even commenting on their own experience requires an analytic approach to thinking and that the persuasive, analytic, and explanatory skills developed in less personally oriented writing should be used to make experientially based writing more powerful.*

**What is Not Covered by the Standards**

The Standards are merely a guideline delineating expectations for students. They do not explicitly express how teachers should teach, or what material teachers should teach. The Standards also do not specify the nature of the work to be provided for advanced students or students who fall below grade-level expectations, students with disabilities, students with special needs, or students who are still acquiring English. The Standards merely provide “clear signposts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students.”

*The Standards do not offer, and do not purport to offer, specifics about how to instruct students who have widely varying special needs. Interestingly, a majority of our students fall into at least one of these categories, and yet all are expected to meet the same standards without any specification from the state as to how these students should be helped. For years, our focus as educators has been the differentiation of instruction, the variation of our teaching strategies in order to reach the sundry learners we have in our classrooms. As our student population becomes increasingly diverse in ability, it seems increasingly difficult to hold said population to universal standards of CCR. On the other hand, by disclosing the Standards’ lack of awareness of students with special needs, the teacher is empowered to utilize his/her professional training to accommodate the needs of these students in the best way he/she sees fit.*

**Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language**

This section delineates the “portrait of students” who meet the expectations set forth in the Standards. These students will demonstrate independence in terms of comprehending and evaluating complex texts across the disciplines. They will build strong content knowledge, engaging in texts and works of “quality and substance.” They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They comprehend as well as critique. They value evidence. They use technology and digital media strategically. They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

*To our understanding, students who have earned a diploma from our high school in past years have possessed all of these qualities. There are, however, subtle points within the subheadings worth exploring here. For instance, how will we determine if a work is of “quality and substance”? Who will judge a student’s ability to critique, and how can this be assessed uniformly? If our content is subjective, then determining whether a student is CCR is also greatly subjective, particularly when dealing with students with special needs. As indicated by these standards, there is a greater need to familiarize students with the library, or whatever a modern library will look like in a few short years. What role will the 21st century librarian play in the education of our students? Perhaps most importantly, how will teachers be prepared to teach students who are “digital natives,” when teachers themselves are falling rapidly behind on the technological curve?*

**How to Read This Document**

The Standards are composed of three main sections: a comprehensive K-5 section, and two content area-specific sections for grades 6-12, one for ELA and one for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The document also has three appendices. Standards are divided into Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Language, and Appendices A, B, and C.

*ELA teachers will be concerned with the 6-12 content specific standards, as well as the CCR “anchor standards” that will apply to teachers of every discipline. It seems logical that teachers will not only concentrate on their own grade level, but also be somewhat familiar with student benchmarks that come before as well as after their own grade level. The Standards, in order to be met with the greatest degree of success, should be studied and understood comprehensively, not exclusively. This will take time, flexibility, and increased communication across grade levels and subjects taught to be accomplished effectively.*

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading**

Keys Ideas and Details

Students should be able to read for explicit information and cite from a text appropriately to support conclusions. Students should be able to determine themes and analyze their development, as well as summarizing important details. Students should be able to analyze the how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop over the course of a text.

*As teachers of ELA, we feel that this is already being done in our classrooms, and with a great deal of success. Empowering students to determine themes and claims is a large part of teaching any work of literature, and also inspires critical thinking.*

Craft and Structure

Students should be able to interpret words as they are used in a text, as well as determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings. Students should understand how these words shape the tone of a text. Students should be able to identify the sections of a text in terms of structure, and then relate these sections to each other. Students should be able to assess the point of view and purpose of a text from the standpoint of style.

*Again, this is something we feel we spend a great deal of time teaching already. What we do not have, however, is a singular departmental way of doing this. Will these new standards eventually push us toward uniformity in how we teach these skills? As it stands, every teacher in the department teaches vocabulary in a different way; there is an ongoing debate between the effectiveness of teaching from a vocabulary book versus pulling vocabulary words from a text we are reading. It is unclear if the Standards are making a case for either, or if the method of instruction is to be determined by the instructor.*

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Students should be able to integrate and evaluate contents in diverse formats and media. Students should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, as well as the validity of the source and the argument. Students should be able to compare how two or more texts deal with the same theme.

*Due to the speed and proliferation of information today, it is imperative that students be taught how to determine the validity of a source, as well as comparing its value to other sources that may have the same theme or topic. Students will have to be able to determine not only the argument, but also the strength of the argument in order to say with certainty that a text is worth exploring or citing as support. One challenge will be to empower students to sort information for validity without relying on a Google search to do the sorting for them. If the Google search is an unavoidable research method, perhaps we should begin teaching how to sort through a Google results page effectively as a beginning step to research.*

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Students should be able to read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

*Today’s student, “smartphone” in hand, often does not want to read independently or draw any conclusions on his/her own. Students are so used to having the answers at their fingertips, that they are very resistant to the idea that they should have to look for their own meaning. To counteract this, many of us read with them in class so that interpretation and critical reading can be modeled. Unfortunately, this probably serves to reinforce their resistance to independent reading. It seems that technology is the bridge here, but we are not there yet in terms of logistics. Students should be led to read independently, and perhaps journal about their reading as a “hook” to engagement with a text.*

**Reading Standards for Literature 6-12**

**For this section, only the parts pertaining to 12th grade will be addressed.**

**Key Ideas and Details**

One skill that students will develop in 11th and 12th grade, as per the standards will be determining where a text leaves matters uncertain. This should build on their already measurable ability to analyze a text for evidence. Students should also be able to find multiple themes or central ideas for a text, as well as identifying plot, setting, and characterization.

*Students, due to a variety of factors, often have trouble understanding not only that a text might have multiple themes, but also WHY a text would have multiple themes. Empowering students to push to locate multiple themes and meanings is a formidable skill that makes their worldview increasingly objective.*

**Craft and Structure**

Students should be able to not only determine the meanings of words, as is taught in earlier grades, but should begin to understand that words may have multiple meanings and that these connotations create tone. Students should be able to identify language as “fresh, engaging, or beautiful.” Students should understand author’s choices regarding structure and aesthetics. Students should be able to identify what is stated in a text and what is meant by a text (e.g. satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

*One way we already address craft and structure is by using short stories, such as “The Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” and poetry, such as a Shakespearean sonnet. It is easier for a student to acquire these skills by first seeing them demonstrated in the short form, and then translating this skill to analyze the long form. Another strategy for modeling structural analysis is to show film clips based on the source material being studied, and asking students to compare author and director “choices.” Comparisons like these can open new avenues of analysis. Also, it is encouraging to see the Standards emphasizing a student’s need not only to analyze a text for meaning, but also for aesthetic purposes. Being able to identify beauty is a valuable skill when added to any critical analysis.*

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Students should be able to analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama or poem, evaluating how each version interprets the source text. Students should also have knowledge of 18th-, 19th-, an 20th- century foundational works of American literature as well as comparison pieces from the same time period.

*In addition to the texts themselves, students are often presented with scenes from films based on that source as a standard for comparison and interpretation—as stated previously. Witnessing the transition of text to visual medium gives a student a more clear understanding of the concept of “perception/perspective,” and how a writer/director/artist perceives the source material as an inspiration for his/her own art. With regard to the ninth point on this list, our curriculum is currently teaching American literature in 11th grade and British literature in 12th grade. Therefore, there is no Shakespeare in the 11th grade curriculum, but there is in 12th grade. Both curricula, however, include companion pieces of poetry, drama, and non-fiction or fiction so that the central piece may be better understood in context. An example of this would be using examples of 1960s American rock and roll songs about loss and death to elucidate English medieval death ballads for 12th grade students.*

**Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

Students should be able to read and comprehend literature at the high end of grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

*The texts read in our 12th grade British literature course are extremely complex in nature, and also focus on universal themes that will introduce students to college-level material. The course is scaffolded so that by the end of the year, they are comfortable reading and interpreting these texts independently.*

**Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12**

**For this section, only the parts pertaining to 12th grade will be addressed.**

**Key Ideas and Details**

This section is identical to the last in terms of what skills 12th grade students should be acquiring in addition to those already acquired in 11th grade.

*A point that should be made here, as well as in the previous section, is that students should be trained in annotation of texts so that they can extract key textual evidence and know how to identify it as such. While we do encourage annotation, it is difficult to do it frequently, since students cannot write in the texts they are given, as they can in college. Photocopying texts for students to annotate is always an option, though we are limited by length in this case.*

**Craft and Structure**

Again, this section is identical to the last in terms of skills a 12th grade student is required to acquire.

*When reading informational texts, students should be taught how to create useful questions about a document. This will help ultimately in the discovery of the various meanings/usages of vocabulary words as well as author intention. One strategy used to engage a student with the text is having the students generate a vocabulary list from the text itself. This gives the student the opportunity for close reading, as well as the opportunity to obtain knowledge of new vocabulary used in context.*

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Variations from the previous “Literature” include that students will be able to evaluate reasoning in seminal US texts, as well as the historical and literary significance of US documents such as the Declaration of Independence.

*As 12th grade is a British Literature survey course, the study of US documents does not apply. However, the study of historical British documents may be incorporated in order to give contextual insight to British literature. While students are currently provided with historical background for various time periods of the literature we study (Medieval, Renaissance, Romantic, Victorian, etc.) there is minimal inclusion of foundational documents at present.*

**Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

This section is identical to the previous section regarding “literature.”

*At present, non-fiction in the 12th grade British Literature course is limited mostly to critical essays about the literature we read. Students are asked to write several research papers that include the critical literary analysis of pertinent thinkers and writers. They use these texts by annotating them, and scouring for information that may be used to support their own analyses. They must also evaluate these essays for their topicality, applicability, and validity. This is all aimed at making our students CCR.*

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing**

Test Types and Purposes

Students should be able to write arguments and support claims using sufficient evidence. Students should be able to write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas. Students should be able to develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique and well-structured sequences.

*We currently teach all three of these skills under the names persuasive, expository, and narrative writing. The method by which we teach the writing of these essays, however, varies between classrooms. We are currently engaged in an ongoing process to find a writing textbook that addresses these skills effectively on every grade level.*

Production and Distribution of Writing

Students should be able to produce clear and coherent writing demonstrating development, organization, and style that are appropriate to the task and audience. Students should be able to develop their writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. Students should be able to use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact with others.

*Students in 12th grade are encouraged to engage in the process of writing and revision as a means of improving work, as well as developing ideas. In most cases, students can rewrite assignments for an improved grade, so long as there is a demonstrable effort made to improve the initial product. We see these skills as invaluable, particularly as a means of CCR. Students often engage in outlining, drafting, and peer review when writing in any style.*

*Students use technology to varying degrees. They are expected to use the Internet for research frequently, as well as moviemaking programs and PowerPoint/slideshow technology to present their findings. Although we have been introduced to approved social networking technology such as Moodle, programs such as these present a wide variety of problems. These potentially include policing these sites for inappropriate student content, liability, and also the assumption that all students have and use a functioning computer and Internet connection at home. In our building, currently, there are not computer labs large enough to accommodate our classes on a consistent basis. Therefore, at present, requiring student use of social networking regularly is not possible.*

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Students should be able to conduct short and sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject. Students should be able to gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility of each source, and integrate this information without plagiarism. Students should draw evidence from literary and informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

*Students conduct a wide range of research reflecting critical analysis of literature, historical topics, biographical information, and current events. The issue of plagiarism has become increasingly problematic for several reasons. The Internet has given students the perception that anyone can “cut and paste” text without citing the source, as this is seen routinely, even on credited sites. In addition, with the ever-growing number/format of electronic sources available, the MLA Handbook needs constant revision and updating. Inadvertent plagiarism is the result of technology growing more rapidly than our guidelines are able to accommodate. Having said that, teachers as well as students must be trained in the documentation of electronic sources. One solution might be to empower the high school librarian to teach the latest developments of research and documentation. As referenced earlier, students should be made aware of the pitfalls of sites such as Google and Wikipedia, as well as the advantages of using these convenient sources appropriately.*

*An example of a research-based assignment would be* *to have students use nonfiction resources found in books, periodicals, and electronic media, choose a topic to research that has direct, practical value to them, and evaluate the topic using three examples and a set of criteria established by the individual students.  For example, if a student is about to buy a car, that student may research the topic of cars, will choose three types of cars (ex. BMW M3, MINI Cooper two-seater, Honda Civic) and the criteria by which he/she will judge the cars (ex. gas mileage, performance, safety, reliability, etc.).  The students will present his/her evaluation of the three selections and arrive at a decision based on his/her personal criteria by the end of the paper (ex.  which car to buy).*

Range of Writing

Students should be writing routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for various tasks and purposes.

*There are advantages to both long and short term writing assignments, and both are employed with regularity in the twelfth grade.*

**Writing Standards 6-12**

**For this section, only the parts pertaining to 12th grade will be addressed.**

**Text Types and Purposes**

Persuasive Writing:

Students should be able to write persuasive pieces that introduce a claim, its significance, and opposing claims that would substantiate the thesis. These claims should be developed, pointing out its strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of the counterclaims. This persuasive piece should use sophisticated phrasing, vocabulary, and structure, creating cohesion between the claim, the reasoning, and the evidence. The persuasive piece should also establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone. Finally, the persuasive piece should provide a concluding statement that follows and supports the argument.

*We do a great deal of persuasive writing in the 12th grade, much of which is geared toward college preparation. One strategy used to instruct students in this type of writing is to write literary essays that draw evidence from the beginning, middle, and end of a text. This way, the student can see how a theme or motif should be traceable throughout a text, just as the student’s claim should be traceable throughout an entire paper. A specific assignment for persuasive writing is having students use the spoken words of the main character of Jean Anouilh's play BECKET as a critical lens to examine the actions of Thomas Becket. Students analyze and discuss what he means when he speaks of honor, extrapolating from the events in the text to argue whether or not he deserves to be called a saint at the close of the play.*

*The use of sophisticated conventions is the point of development from grades nine and ten to grades eleven and twelve. Modeling the critical analysis of accredited writers and exceptional former students are both effective ways of instructing in this process. Corrections and revisions are also essential to student achievement in this area.*

Expository Writing:

Students should be able to write informative and explanatory texts that examine complex ideas and concepts. They should be able to introduce this topic through organization of complex ideas and concepts, building on information to create a unified essay. The topic should be developed by selecting significant facts, details, and other examples necessary for the audience’s comprehension of the piece of writing. The expository text should use appropriate and clear transitions, syntax, and language to connect and develop ideas and concepts. Language should be precise, and should use metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage complex ideas. The essay should exhibit the formal style of the discipline in which the student is writing. The conclusion should follow form and support the information presented.

*While expository writing is assigned with frequency, it is not uniformly taught. Once again, a writing text would help send clear and consistent messages to students throughout their high school years, increasing their confidence and ability to write effectively. One example of an assignment currently used is having students analyze Viking society based on its expression in the epic poem* Beowulf*.  Students will extract textual evidence in the form of a minimum of ten quotes and additional examples to discuss the Viking conception of the ideal warrior, the society's values, the society's concept of sin/immorality, and the type of relationship to the Christian God that the Vikings have based on the Christianization of this much older pagan text.*

Narrative Writing:

Students should be able to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, with appropriate detail and structure. Narrative writing should engage the reader by demonstrating its significance and point of view. It should effectively use dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and plot lines to explicate said experience. Students should be able to build on events in order to build suspense or interest. Students should also be able to use precise words, phrases, and language to convey a complete image of the experience. The conclusion should be an appropriate reflection of the sequence of events described.

*Senior year, the most important piece of narrative writing we teach is the college essay. This assignment invariably reveals an extremely wide array of writing abilities. There are students whose best work is done when writing about themselves, and there are others, many of whom are gifted writers, who are unable to write meaningful or thoughtful pieces about personal topics. Much of the disparity is derived from the students’ wealth of personal experiences, or lack thereof, depending on the student. On the other hand, the lack of control demonstrated in the least successful essays is somewhat alarming. There are problems ranging from sequencing, transitions, lack of detail and specific examples, and complete lack of understanding of audience and purpose. These essays are outlined, drafted, peer edited, and then fully corrected and re-corrected multiple times. In the end, the results continue to be uneven.*

*Another avenue into narrative writing is journaling as a timed writing exercise in expression. This is often employed as an “ice breaker” or brainstorming activity before a paper is assigned or as a “Do Now.”*

**Production and Distribution of Writing**

Students should be able to produce coherent writing, develop through planning, revising, editing, and focusing on appropriateness for a specific audience. Students should also use technology and the Internet to produce, publish, and share writing and feedback.

*Students arrive at a finished piece of writing in many ways. They are always encouraged to write and revise, though with a large group of students, just writing one draft is a great effort. Those who put the time and effort in demonstrate increased success, as well as attaining a sense of personal satisfaction and confidence in their writing. Students enjoy sharing their writing and reading that of their peers. They also learn a great deal from this process. We do this by having peer readings or “pair and share” in class, creating portfolios, and producing class anthologies.*

**Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Students should be able to conduct short- and long-term research assignments to answer questions or solve problems. They should be able to synthesize information from multiple sources, and gather relevant information from print and digital sources while avoiding plagiarism. They should also be able to document sources appropriately, and avoid over-reliance on any one source, while maintaining the flow of ideas.

*Using the high school library, students are consistently engaged in the process of research and documentation with a wealth of accredited sources and educated guidance. Research is used for literary essays and persuasive essays, as well as debates and oral presentations. Plagiarism is a complicated problem, already discussed in this document.*

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening**

Comprehension and Collaboration

Students should prepare for and participate in a range of conversations and collaborations, building on ideas and expressing themselves convincingly. They should be able to integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats. They should be able to evaluate a speaker’s point of view and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Students will present information, findings, and evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning as appropriate to the task. Students should use digital media and visual displays of data.

*In 12th grade English, students are constantly engaged in oral presentations. They create hero tales and boasts similar to* Beowulf*, and present them as if in a mead hall setting. They research scientific and moral issues related to* Frankenstein*, and present debates against classmates. In this exercise, the students not presenting serve as the audience and jury, evaluating information and asking pertinent questions. They read scenes from Shakespeare, cut lines that they feel can be eliminated, and then perform what remains, thus taking ownership over the document in every facet. Sometimes the instructor chooses the groups, and sometimes students choose their own; this way, students are exposed to a variety of opinions and processes. Students read selections from* TheCanterbury Tales*, and then speak about the value of stereotypes and how they are useful as marketing tools to get an understanding of demographics and common attitudes.  After that they form groups and each take a contemporary stereotype and they have to create a reason they were all together -- like stuck in an elevator, sharing a taxi in a traffic jam, bus breaks down, etc. -- and they all tell each other stories.  The stories should be expressive of the type of tale each stereotype would tell (e.g. drug dealer, jock, rock star, sometimes taxi cab driver, politician, cop, etc.).  The teacher serves as the judge (Chaucer's role) and scores them with Olympic scoring.  The winning team gets a breakfast or lunch (depending on the class period) and the rest of the class brings the food.  The winners make speeches in character. For Viking tales, students create their own tales that have Viking elements and then they have to present them either live or on AUDIO tape/CD since they were used to LISTENING, not watching.  At the Winter Nights Festival, students give a toast in the sumbel (series of ritualized toast) that fit with the prescription depending on what round it is (toast to gods, toast to ancestors, toast to local hero usually).  They also have to describe a sacrifice and act out a divination.*

*When we do* Macbeth*, students form groups to translate a scene into contemporary slang or regular contemporary language and act it out with the new lines to make sure they understand what's going on.  They can use costumes, sound effects, and background music.*

**Speaking and Listening Standards 6-12**

**For this section, only the parts pertaining to 12th grade will be addressed.**

**Presentation and Collaboration**

Students should be able to initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions on 12th grade topics, texts, and issues. Students should come prepared, having read materials, and use this preparation to participate in an exchange of ideas. Students should also be able to participate in and respond thoughtfully to discussions on a range of issues. They should also be able to listen for use of evidence, rhetoric, and tone in other speakers, as well as integrating multiple sources of information.

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

Students should be able to present findings in a clear manner, so that the listener can follow a distinct line of reasoning. Students should make appropriate use of digital media in presentation. Students should demonstrate a command of formal English when speaking.

*In addition to the many activities listed previously, students, on a nearly daily basis, perform small group tasks involving close readings and interpretation, followed by the presentation of these ideas. They engage in group teaching, literary circles, and class discussion of essential questions. Students are extremely adept at using technology to enhance these presentations, and enjoy sharing their creations with the class. This tends to foster friendly competition, inspiring students to strive for excellence.*

**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language**

Conventions of Standard English

Students should demonstrate control of standard English grammar and usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in writing or speech.

*At present, there is no grammar text or formal unit for teaching grammar in the 12th grade. While the focus of the course is to prepare students for college level writing, more effort is directed at style and form. Of course, each teacher addresses grammar questions and problems as they arise with each writing assignment, teaching grammar lessons based on common errors and addressing individual issues within the comments of a given student’s paper.*

Knowledge of Language

Students should be able to understand how language is used in different contexts and make/distinguish effective choices in meaning or style.

*This is the nature of how literature is studied in 12th grade. From epic poetry, to Shakespeare, to Victorian Gothicism, to Oscar Wilde’s wit, students are instructed to detect the style and tone of language, and to understand it in context. We trace thematic ideas through the centuries, while paying close attention to shifts in tone and expression. Students also practice writing in the style Charlotte Bronte, for instance, to capture her voice and thereby understand the motivation behind a character like Jane Eyre.*

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Students should be able to determine or clarify the meaning or multiple meanings of words by using context clues, and by using appropriate reference materials. Students should be aware of word nuances and relationships. Students should use a side variety of academic and discipline-specific words and phrases for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the CCR level, as well as demonstrating independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge.

*Currently in the 12th grade curriculum, vocabulary words are chosen from the complex texts that we are reading. This is done in several ways. One is to extract the words from a text and give students a list of words to define with parts of speech. Another is to have students create their own lists (with a minimum number of words) and they look up those words with parts of speech, thus mimicking what a reader typically does: looks up words as he reads. This is typically the way one's vocabulary actually does increase, as opposed to memorizing lists.  The teacher often defines words as the class is reading for the purpose of comprehension, asking first if anyone knows what a given words means.*

**Language Standards 6-12**

**For this section, only the parts pertaining to 12th grade will be addressed.**

**Conventions of Standard English**

Students should understand the conventions of standard English, and that its usage is a matter of convention that can change over time. Usage can also be the source of rich, scholarly debate. Students should also be able to demonstrate command of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, observing hyphenation conventions where appropriate.

*Particularly with regard to British literature, the Oxford English Dictionary is a great for demonstrating the evolution of words from their first appearance in print to their current usage. Shakespeare’s language is used often as the gateway to understanding complex usage and evolution.*

**Knowledge of Language**

Students should apply knowledge of how language functions in different contexts in order to make effective choices for meaning or style. They should be able to vary syntax and apply an understanding of such in complex texts.

*Students’ level of understanding increases in their senior year through close reading and work with complex British texts. What we do not have, however, is a text or reference style guide that is regularly used for instruction.*

**Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**

Students should be able to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases through a range of strategies. Students should use context clues, word patterns and changes, and use appropriate reference materials to find pronunciation, meaning, part of speech, and etymology. They should also demonstrate understanding of figurative language and word nuances. Finally, they should be developing their vocabulary, both general academic and domain specific, on a CCR level.

*Methods of teaching vocabulary to 12th grades students are addressed in the Anchor Standards for Language section of this document.*

**Language Progressive Skills, by Grade**

Reflection:

*The development of these skills is incremental by grade, seemingly insisting that teachers of sequential grade levels meet to discuss the scaffolding of this material. Presently, not nearly enough 12th graders are proficient in these Standards, and it is essential that the teacher of 12th grade be better informed as to the method of instruction in previous years so that appropriate skill-building can take place. Instruction in the 12th grade should include the use of a grammar text and a style reference book, which we are currently investigating. So much of what we do currently is based on the literature that we read, as we incorrectly assume that students are proficient in the use of fundamentals. There has been discussion that a second class period of English be considered to focus specifically on the development of fundamental language skills, while the existing class period focuses on the literature we currently teach. As demonstrated by the fact that ELA is the only subject with its own set of Common Core Standards, there is clearly a lot of additional work expected to be done in the English curriculum in the upcoming years. How it will be managed will take a great deal of reassessment with regard to time management.*

**Standard 10- Range, Quality, and Complexity of Student Reading 6-12**

Reflection:

*Text complexity should be measured by a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the text, as well as measuring the reader to the text and task. Students should be introduced to texts including literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as informational texts. In the 12th grade, we read very few informational texts. The search has begun for informational materials that can be used to enhance the context of the literature that we already read. Examples of informational texts include literary analysis and scientific documents used for the* Frankenstein *debate.*

**Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading 6-12**

Reflection:

*The 12th grade curriculum currently demonstrates a logical balance of chronological organization, as well as thematic development. Texts build on one another to elucidate themes such as good versus evil as they develop in texts such as* Macbeth*,* Paradise Lost*, and* Frankenstein*. These themes are examined in the context of historical significance, as well as the context of the literary movement in which they are included. These themes transcend genres and centuries of writing, up until the most modern work we study—*Waiting for Godot*.*

References

*Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.* (June 2010) http://www.corestandards.org/